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The image shows the front cover of a book. The main part of the cover is decorated with a marbled paper pattern. This pattern consists of large, irregular, dark blue-grey shapes with small white speckles, set against a background of swirling dark red and brown lines. A vertical strip of dark, possibly black, material covers the spine of the book. On the lower part of this dark strip, the text '138. g. 7.' is printed in a gold-colored serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: '138.' on the first line, 'g.' on the second line, and '7.' on the third line. There are two thin horizontal gold lines above the first line of text.

138.
g.
7.



A
DISCOURSE
UPON
Wandering Thoughts
IN
PRAYER,
Shewing the
CAUSES
AND
REMEDIES thereof.

Psal. vi. 2. *Have Mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak.*

2 Cor. xii. 9. *My Grace is sufficient for thee: for my Strength is made perfect in Weakness.*

By ABRA. MACKBETH, E. A. P.

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mew-Close near West-Smithfield, 1713.

138. g. 7.



A
DISCOURSE
OF
Wandering Thoughts
IN
PRAYER.

The Introduction.

THE Prophet *Isaiah*, who,
for his clear Predictions
concerning the *Gospel*, is
properly and worthily
called the *Evangelical Prophet*, speak-
eth thus in his *XLth* Chapter, and
A 2 the

the LXIst Chapter, an
Second, and Third Vers
rit of the Lord God is
cause the LORD hath
to preach good Tidings un
h: hath sent me to bind
en-hearted; to proclaim
Captives, and the opening
son: to them that are bo
claim the acceptable Year
and the Day of Vengeance
to comfort all that mo
point unto them that mo
to give unto them Beau
the Oil of Joy for
Garment of Praise for
Hallelujah: that they m

This *Prophecy* was expressly applied by our Saviour to himself in *St. Luke* IV. 21. So that we may be assured he came not only to provide for our everlasting Happiness in the other World, but also to comfort us in this. And every true and faithful Minister of his Word, can very truly say with *St. Paul* and *Timothy*, in *2 Cor.* I. 3, 4, 5. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort; who comforteth us in all our Tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we our selves are comforted of God. For if the Sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our Consolation also aboundeth by Christ.*

But since there is no heavier Burden, nor greater Cause of Complaint, to sincere Christians, who truly love God, and desire faithfully and acceptably to serve and worship him, than wandering Thoughts in Prayer; for that is a spiritual Load (more grievous and more difficult to bear than any temporal Affliction), ma-

uenerable and acceptable to
ble and well-disposed
should be pleased to
Time upon the reading
dering of this present
while perhaps they have
and till, through the
divine Providence, the
better Help in this C
we may hope to see,
more experienced and
Guide of Souls, or for
Servant and Disciple of
and Saviour, who hath
er Proficiency in his
School, than I have
communicate his bett

in P R A Y E R. 7

In the mean Time I shall, according to the Measure of Grace and Understanding bestowed upon me by the *Father of Lights*, endeavour to shew, in Three several Chapters, *First*, What *Prayer* is. *Secondly*, What are the true *Causes* of *Wandring Thoughts* in *Prayer*. And, *Thirdly*, what *Remedies* are proper to be used and applied against this Distemper of our Souls.

§. I. **P**RAYER is
pious Souls to
their Conversation with C
divine Exercise, where
verted Sinner is unc
which can be rightly
none but a regenerate
it is not a Work of
of *Grace*; being wroug
duced in our Souls b
of Christ: insomuch th
are not endued with t
Christ, do not really *pray*
therefore an unconve
being void of that D
and having no real

I answer, it is very true ; that no Person is converted without Prayer ; neither yet can any one pray without Assistance of the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of Grace, and of Supplications, Zech. XII. 10. *helpeth our Infirmities, maketh Intercession for the Saints,* (i. e. for all true Christians) *according to the Will of God,* Rom. VIII. 26, 27. and being the Spirit of Faith, 2 Cor. IV. 13. enableth us to call God *Father,* Rom. VIII. 15. and without his Aid no one can devoutly repeat the *Lord's-Prayer,* which beginneth with these Words: *Our Father, which art in Heaven.* But the Spirit of God is always ready to assist poor Sinners in their Repentance ; nay, he is continually *striving* with them in order to their Conversion ; till some perhaps are so hardened in Sin by their own Obstinacy and Malice, that the continued Offers of Grace being still despised and rejected by them, would but rise in Judgment against them, and aggravate their Condemnation at the Day of Judgment. Such Persons may therefore

pals, and
stantly offered to most men
as they live; and every
the whole Course of their
so ordered and directed
Providence, as to prom
Conversion and Salvation
not hindred by the ob
sistance of their own c
finful Hearts. So that e
those that continue firm
tent, are not reprobated
natural Death.

And since the holy s
ways ready to stir up
to true *Repentance*, H
ready and willing to
which H

is thereby excited with Conviction of his Guilt and Misery, to *Prayer* and Repentance; obediently receiving the offered Grace, and faithfully improving it; he is enabled to *pray* sincerely and acceptably to God, by the powerful Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*, who is the first Mover and Cause of all our *Prayers*, and without whose Help we should never be able to *pray* at all.

§. II. This Divine Exercise of *Prayer*, is either *Oral* or *Mental*. *Oral Prayer*, is outwardly expressed by Words; *Mental Prayer*, is only conceived and formed in the Heart, and there expressed inwardly either by devout and holy Thoughts, or else by spiritual *Sighs* and *Groans*, Rom. VIII. 26.

Oral Prayer, is either *Publick* or *Private*.

Publick Prayer, is performed with the Congregation at Church.

Private Prayer is twofold, being performed either with the Family, and therefore called *Family-Prayer*; or alone by one's self, which may be called *Secret Prayer*, or *praying in secret*, Matth. VI. 6.

Mental

Of Wandring Thoughts

Mental Prayer may be practised in all Places, and upon all Occasions. It consisteth principally in a religious Disposition or Habit of Mind, whereby we are ready to give up our Hearts to God, with short *Ejaculations* and devout Petitions at all Times. And by doing so, and *praying* more solemnly whenever we have an Opportunity for it, we literally fulfill that most valuable Injunction of *St. Paul*, in *1 Thess. V. 17. Pray without ceasing.*

III. But none of these Kinds of Prayer will be accepted of God, or contribute any thing to our real Happiness, unless it proceed from

And that what I have here said is unquestionably true, plainly appears from *John IV. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.*

§. IV. Whoever prayeth aright, will be sure to receive many and great *Advantages* from thence.

And 1. Thus we shall maintain and enjoy constant *Communion* with the most holy and undivided Trinity, with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost:

2. We shall obtain all *good* things, both spiritual and temporal, which are necessary or expedient for us.

3. We shall enjoy the *Divine Protection* at all Times.

4. We may have Recourse to infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness, to *help* us in Time of Temptation, Necessity, and Distress.

5. We shall make a happy *Progress* towards the Kingdom of eternal Glory, and shall be still growing in Grace.

6. We may obtain many spiritual and temporal Blessings for our *Friends*, and for the Church of
Christ

8. And so we may come
to enjoy a great deal of
Satisfaction, and Delight, ev
we are engaged in this our
Warfare ; unless God shall
to order it otherwise, for h
er Glory, and our greater

CHAP. II.

Causes of Wandering Thoughts in
PRAYER.

§. I. **A**S the Advantages of *Prayer* are very great, so the Performance thereof is attended with *Difficulties* and *Discouragements*; notwithstanding which it is highly necessary to perform this great and excellent Duty, in the best and most perfect Manner that ever we can. And it will be infinitely worth our while, with divine Aid, to break through and surmount those *Difficulties* and *Discouragements*; whereof I shall now mention but one, as being perhaps the principal and most extensive, as well as most troublesome and grievous, most dangerous and hurtful of all that can assault us, and hinder the Effect of our *Prayers*. And that is *Wandering Thoughts*. For I speak here only of sincere and faithful Christians, not of them
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hinders them from *praying*
bly at all. And this ind
greater Hindrance of *Pray*
that I have mentioned abo
I never knew any such Perso
troubled at *Wandering Thou*
complain of them in earnest
a heavy Burthen, and a C
their Souls ; tho' without d
their *Thoughts wander* afte
Objects, while they prete
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ing to God ; which will be
upon them at last, by the
just Judgment of God, as
right Hypocrisie, and *tak*
only Name in vain. I am 1

discouraged by nothing more, than by *Wandering Thoughts* in Prayer.

And for their Sake I shall now endeavour to shew the *Causes* of that spiritual Disease, in this Chapter, and proper *Remedies* for it in the next.

The First *Cause* of *Wandering Thoughts* in Prayer, is the greatest and the worst of them all, and the *Cause* of all the rest; even our *Natural Corruption* or *Original Sin*. From this all *actual Sins*, whether of Commission or of Omission; from this all evil and sinful Thoughts, Words, and Actions, certainly proceed. And as the *Corruption* of our *Nature* appeareth in nothing more, than in taking our Affections off from God, to place them upon his Creatures; so by our *Thoughts wandering* in Time of Prayer from God, who ought then to be their only Object, and running after innumerable other Objects, with which they have nothing to do at present, we may plainly discover, that even after our Conversion, *Original Sin* remaineth in us, though it doth
not

Prayer, is some evil Habits
not yet sufficiently mort
and hearty Repentanc
evil Habits may be red
of these Three, mentio
John in his First Epist
II. Ver. 16. *All that is i*
the Lust of the Flesh, and
the Eyes, and the Pride
not of the Father, but is
Here we see, that 1st, *th*
Flesh, or the Love of c
sure; 2^{dly}, *The Lust of*
Covetousness and Desire

proceeding from a worldly Frame and Disposition of Mind, which, as we may justly infer from the 15th Verse of this Chapter, is inconsistent with true Piety; for there the Apostle saith expressely, that *if any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him*: and certainly he that is void of the Love of God, is void of true Piety and Christianity, whatever good Opinion he may have of himself. And altho' no sincere Christian is wholly influenced by any of those Three evil Principles, or subject to the Dominion of those sinful *Habits*; yet so long as Original Sin remaineth in us, which I suppose to be as long as we live in this World, we shall be troubled more or less with divers Temptations, inclining us to gratifie those worldly and sinful *Lusts*. And altho sincere Christians do not use to yield willingly to such Temptations, and so to commit wilful and presumptuous Sin; yet they will without doubt be continually solicited by their spiritual Enemies, to set their Affections up-
ON

the worship of God, which
is an essential Part.

And if we afterward
reflect upon the *Wanders*
that have interrupted our
we shall assuredly perceive
many of them as we c
ber, had respect to one
those evil *Lusts*. And we
that we are most easily
by those *Lusts* that are m
to the natural Constitution
Bodies, and Inclination of

§. III. Our *Thoughts* v
to *wander* in Time of P
our *Devotion* flags, and c
God grows cold, which

the Delight which we should take in approaching the most perfect Good, and the most amiable of all Beings, is greatly diminished, or perhaps quite abolished. And then no Wonder, if, finding no Delight and Satisfaction in the Performance of this Duty, we perform it heavily and without any Vigour and earnest Application of Mind. So our Attention languisheth, and *Wandering Thoughts* very easily insinuate themselves into our cold and unaffected Hearts.

§. IV. Many times even they that are truly pious, become, through divers Temptations, too *negligent* of their Salvation, having too little Desire of, and Regard to, the eternal Happiness of Heaven, and those Means of Grace, and Gifts of the Spirit, which are necessary to fit and qualify them for the Enjoyment thereof. And this *Carelessness* very naturally and certainly produceth a kind of Indifference, whether they obtain such spiritual and heavenly Benefits or no. Then, as most of our *Petitions* and *Thanksgiv-*
ings

small Value we at the
on those sublime but
jects. And thus Way
any sort of *Wandering* :

§. V. *Weakness of Faith*
of exercising that exce
cessary Grace, likewise
ly maketh Room in our
Wandering Thoughts in re
cerning this great Evil
speaketh thus in Chapter
6, 7, 8. *If any of you lack
let him ask of God, that
Men liberally, and upbraida
it shall be given him.
ask in Faith, nothing wavereth,
be that wavereth, is like*

Now when our *Faith* thus faileth, we do not see the Advantage arising from our *Prayers*, because we are not then excited to a lively and encouraging Hope and Prospect of obtaining what we ask. And by consequence, the Fervour of our Devotion is very much allayed, our Minds are greatly discouraged, and easily diverted to other Objects; as Men commonly are slow and heartless at their Work, when they imagine that they labour in vain.

§. VI. Farther, some great *Danger*, heavy *Affliction*, or *Trouble* of *Mind*, is apt to disturb our Devotion, by crowding very many sorrowful and anxious *Thoughts* into our dejected Hearts. For it is very difficult (if possible) to lay aside all Reflexion upon our present Grief, which so nearly concerneth us; and to give up our selves to *Prayer* without Distraction, altho' indeed that doth still more nearly concern us. And we are hurried away with some sort of Violence, to a sorrowful Remembrance of our Danger and Distress, and very apt, through

pretext.

§. VII. Again, many Christians and well-disposed Persons by the most wise and merciful refection of divine Providence are subject to some bodily Distemper, which is of such a Nature, affecting the Head, it unavails scattereth their *Thoughts*, and dreth their more devout on to *Prayer* and the Will of God. So that they are Times as that Distemper constantly exposed to strange Concoits, and confounding *Thoughts*, upon great Objects, and of the

fore in this Respect, that our Will is something concerned in *them*, but not at all in *this*. A true Christian indeed seldom (if ever) giveth a full Consent to the *Wandering* of his *Thoughts* in time of *Prayer*; but if we consider the foregoing *Causes*, we shall find there some Degree of Compliance at least. Whereas here is nothing voluntary to be discerned, and all the Rovings of the Imagination are purely involuntary, and utterly abhorred by him or her that is troubled therewith.

And it is a Consideration of very great Weight and Importance, that such a Person is troubled with the like unaccountable and *Wandering Thoughts*, when employed about any thing else, which is never so agreeable to his or her own Inclinations and Will.

§. VIII. All other *Causes* of *Wandering Thoughts* in *Prayer* are put in Motion, are heightened and increased, by the subtle and malicious *Temptations* of that great and irreconcilable Enemy of God and our

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Souls,

~~Drives into our minds,~~
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C H A P. III.

Remedies *against Wandering Thoughts*
in Prayer.

§. I. **F**IRST, Since we are not able to think, speak, or do any the least spiritual good thing by our own natural Power, and without the Assistance of divine Grace; we must, above all things, *pray* often, and as fervently as we are able, for the Aid of God's holy *Spirit*, that we may so be enabled to worship him with Sincerity, Reverence and Attention, according to his Will. And they that are not provided with some better Help, may frequently repeat the following Form.

‘ **O** Almighty and most merciful
‘ God, the Father of our Lord
‘ and Saviour Jesus Christ! take
‘ Pity upon me, a miserable Sinner;
‘ and reject me not for my great Un-
‘ worthiness. Thou knowest, Lord,
‘ the Sorrows of my Heart. Thou
‘ knowest how heartily I am griev-
‘ ed for my great Corruption and
‘ my innumerable Sins. O give me

the Lust of the Flesh, the
Eye, and the Pride of L
turn immediately to Th
my Heart. Help me to t
fections off from all thi
low, that I may set
things above, where C
at the right Hand of C
that I may love The
things, and thy Creatu
Subordination to Thee
Sake. Enable me to t
how good and graciou
and strengthen my F
may therewith behol

‘ our Redeemer Christ Jesus. Make
 ‘ me to be truly resigned to thy bless-
 ‘ ed Will in all things, and patient-
 ‘ ly and contentedly to bear any
 ‘ either outward or inward Cross,
 ‘ which Thou art pleas’d to lay up-
 ‘ on me at any Time. Strengthen
 ‘ me to resist the Devil, that he may
 ‘ flee from me. And since I know
 ‘ and confess my own Weakness,
 ‘ and the great Imperfection of my
 ‘ best Performances in thy Service,
 ‘ let thy good Spirit help my Infirmi-
 ‘ ties; and be Thou pleased gracious-
 ‘ ly to encourage me in using my
 ‘ utmost Endeavours, to worship
 ‘ Thee still with more steady Atten-
 ‘ tion and more fervent Zeal. And
 ‘ then finally, notwithstanding my
 ‘ many Failings & wandring Thoughts,
 ‘ O give me Leave, and give me
 ‘ Power, humbly to rely upon thy in-
 ‘ finite Goodness for Acceptance of
 ‘ my imperfect Devotions, for the
 ‘ Sake of our Lord Jesus Christ; to
 ‘ whom with Thee and the Holy
 ‘ Ghost, be all Honour and Glory,
 ‘ World without End. *Amen.*

§. II. *Secondly,* We must have a
 B 3 par-

out to subdue and root out
ruption of our *Nature*, and to
the nearest and most danger
my of our Salvation, which
nal Sin; according to that
Eph. IV. 22, 23, 24. That
concerning the former Conver
old *Man*, which is corrupt ac
the deceitful Lusts: And be
the Spirit of your *Mind*; and
on the new *Man*; which afi
created in Righteousness and
ness. And as in *Col. III. 9. St.*
exhorteth them and us: *Lie*
another, seeing that ye have put
Man with his Deeds, and ha
the new *Man*, which is renewed

ruption more and more ; so that it may not reign over us now, as it did before our Conversion to God. And if we do this as we ought, if we faithfully and courageously maintain our Ground in the spiritual Warfare, taking part with the *Spirit* against the *Flesh*, we shall make continual Progress in Christian Piety, putting off not only the *old Man*, that is, *Original Sin*, but also his *Deeds*, that is, our *actual Sins*, which (as I have observed before) proceed from that, and therefore they will of course be mortified together with it. And whoever maketh the Experiment, will find to his great Comfort, that the more his *natural Corruption* is mortified, the less he will be perplexed with *Wandering Thoughts* in Prayer. For this is one of the accursed *Branches* growing up from that bitter *Root* ; this is one of the *Deeds* of the *Old Man*, which either flourisheth or decayeth along with its *Root*, with the *Cause* from whence it proceedeth.

However, it may please God sometimes to permit the most sincere and the most experienced Christians, to be troubled with *Wandering Thoughts*,
arise

offer my poor Advice,
to propose *Remedies*
Causes in their Order.

2. As for any *sinful*
Habit of Mind, from
Wandering Thoughts proce
be carefully discover'd
Examination of our
and Life. And when it
it must be continually n
destroyed by daily and
of *Repentance*. I say he
as daily, because we ma
tempted to commit the
least to entertain the 7
with Delight. And th
immediately draw and st

before we are aware of it, but we may immediately discern it, and contend with it, striving, with the Help of God, to check its very first Motions, and prevent its gaining any Advantage over us. But if we be so employed, that we cannot retire to *pray* when it cometh upon us, we must perform that by *mental Prayer*, and hearty inward *Ejaculations* to Heaven, which we have not Opportunity to do by *Oral Prayer*, in such an Exigency as that. And if we are but faithful to God and our own Souls, he will certainly supply us with *Grace to help in time of Need*, Heb. IV. 16.

If you are tempted to the abominable Sin of *Uncleanness*, it will be proper to observe this particular Rule. The safest and surest Way is, immediately to divert your Mind from such *Thoughts*, to some good Object, especially to God himself; earnestly endeavouring to forget the Temptation, and to go on resolutely in the Performance of your Duty, as soon as possibly you can. For such *impure Thoughts* are very apt to gain Ground of any one that will stand to
B 5.
dis.

When we are assaulted with temptations in the Time of discipline at Church, it may be observed the Methods recommended in the Third Section follow.

3. In order to quicken and increase our *Devotion*, and to increase our love to God, we must frequently meditate on his supreme Excellency and greatness, and the immense Gratitude of his *Love* to us. We must humbly and earnestly beseech him to increase his *Love* in our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost, Rom. V. 5. And we

Neighbour as our selves, Matth. XXII. 37. Mark XII. 30, &c. Luke X. 27. And we must earnestly endeavour to attain such a Frame and Habit of Mind, as to have God always before us, and act from a Principle of true *Love* to him, and seek his Glory in every thing we undertake.

4. To excite our selves to a very *earnest Desire* of *Salvation*, and a *high Esteem* of the glorious Kingdom of *Heaven*, and of those several *Means* of *Grace*, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, or Christian Virtues, which are necessary to qualifie us for the Enjoyment thereof, we ought frequently to consider of such Arguments as these. That our Souls are immortal, and must as certainly enjoy *eternal Life*, or else suffer *everlasting Death*, after we depart out of this World, as we now live and converse in it. That the *Joys* of *Heaven* exceed all humane Comprehension. So that the Saints and Martyrs have voluntarily and cheerfully parted with all their worldly Goods, and even with their natural Life it self, in Imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for his Sake, that they might glorifie God, and rejoice
for

prepared for them that love him
IV. 18. *We look not at the things
are seen, but at the things which
seen: For the things which are
temporal; but the things which
seen are eternal,* Heb. XI. XI
We ought to meditate on
other Passages of holy Writ
forth the superlative *Excellent
Happiness* which our Lord an
hath purchased for us with his
and to beseech our heavenly
to give us the manifold and
ble *Graces* of his holy *Spirit*,
with a truly Christian and
Disposition of Mind. And
And by happy Remembrance

ftians. Wherefore I conclude that every converted Person hath at least a Grain of true *Faith*, and a Spark of Celestial Light and Spiritual Life in his Heart. And this divine Principle must be continually improved, by rightly using those Three great Means of Proficiency in the Christian Religion, *Prayer, Meditation, and Temptation*; and by often duly receiving the *Supper* of our *Lord*. Let us imitate the Example of the Apostles, in praying to our Saviour to *increase our Faith*, Luke XVII. 5. And let us search out those several Texts of Scripture, wherein God hath promised to hear our *Prayers*; and attentively meditate upon them, and beseech God to write them in our Hearts. And let us often consider of the great Excellency of *Prayer*, and the innumerable and unvaluable Advantages that arise from the hearty and devout Performance of it.

But we must likewise be careful to exercise that Degree of *Faith* we have already obtained, in the Time of *Prayer*. We must then firmly and steadily believe, that if we ask any thing according to the Will of God, he heareth us :
And

ed Grace; that many
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have met with some Ex
hath eminently quickn
my *Faith*, that hath imm
my Devotion, increas
on, and dispelled my *Wa*
And I am fully perswa
more our *Faith* increa
more we exercise it i
Prayer; the more we
and lay aside those Imp

6. When we are ex
great *Danger*, we must

who careth for us, 1 Pet. V. 7. We must also use Christian Prudence and great Circumspection, together with all such proper *Means* as he is pleased to put in our Power, to prevent the Calamity that threateneth us ; and then we must leave the Event intirely to him, who will certainly bring *all things* to a good Issue, and cause them to *work together for our Good*, Rom. VIII. 28.

If we labour under any *Affliction*, either spiritual or *temporal*, we must very earnestly pray and strive for humble Resignation to the most blessed Will of God, and for Sanctification of our Troubles and Trials to the Glory of his great Name, and the promoting of our Salvation, and to the Good of his Church. We must not be cast down, but put our whole Trust in God, labouring faithfully to answer the gracious and beneficial Ends, for which his Fatherly Love hath laid the Affliction upon us. We must carefully observe the Instructions given us in *Heb. XII.* and many other Places of holy Writ. We must remember and practise what St. Peter saith in his first Epistle, the Vth Chapter and 6th Verse, *Humble your selves therefore under th*
might

far more
of Glory; while we look
which are seen, but at
are not seen: for the thin
are temporal, but the thi
seen are eternal.

7. When by the Ju
Physician, or your ow
vation, or both, you
your Head is affecte
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have no Foundatio
... absurd

lick or private, and would gladly be freed from them, if you could. For that will be a Sign that (as hath been already observed in Chap. II. §. 7.) your Will is not here concerned. Which will farther appear from hence; that you are likewise troubled with such Thoughts at other times, when you are employed about such things as are very agreeable to your own Will (as hath been likewise hinted above); and therefore you would not be interrupted when you are so employed, if it were in your Power and Choice to prevent it. Neither would you be disturbed thus in your *Devotions*, if you could possibly avoid it. For that is the Mind of all true and sincere Christians, for whose Sake only this Discourse was drawn up. And in this Case, you ought not to think that our infinitely good God will censure your *Wandering Thoughts* with the dreadful Severity of an offended Judge; but that he will behold you under your great and heavy Affliction, with the tender Pity and Compassion of a loving Father. So that if you heartily endeavour to bear your Trial with *Patience*, and with Submission to his

In-

and wholesome Effects. . .
you to set a greater Value
Gifts and Graces of God's
and to *work out your Salvation*
and Trembling, according to
God.

But here it must be farther
ed, that if your *Thoughts* . . .
when you are at your *Devotion*
at any other time, that is
ly a certain Sign, that ye
it, and so make it an Act
and a wilful Sin. No, that
from the Conjunction of
with this and

And what if God shall see fit to let you struggle with this Difficulty, for your greater Good, as long as you live? Be assured, that your violent and tedious Conflict in this spiritual War, *will bring forth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness at last*; and you will, by happy Experience, know the Truth of this Scripture, *Matth. V. 4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* And of this: *Psal. CXXVI. 6. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious Seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his Sheaves with him.*

In short, dear Christian, you may rest satisfied, that the more *Sorrow* you endure in this Life, in Obedience to the most holy and blessed Will of God, the more Joy you will receive, through the Merits of Christ, in the glorious Kingdom of Heaven.

8. As to the Devil, we are plainly cautioned to watch against him, and resist him, in several Places of holy Writ. But nowhere more plainly, than in *1 Pet. V. 8. Be sober, be vigilant; because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the Faith,*

never be too piously
dustrious to avoid,
away his dangerous
are innumerable, up
vast Variety of Ot
by him to our Imagi
Incentives to Evil.
continually pray a
Extirpation of his
and expecting him
let us be upon our
ry evil *Thought* th
arise in our Hearts
of divine Grace,
receive it. imme

other Virtues belonging to a Christian, we must be very careful to exercise, preserve and encrease it, according to the Directions given above in Number 5. For that is necessary in order to resist and overcome all his Temptations, and especially his most violent Assaults, even blasphemous and hellish *Thoughts*, which he many times casteth, like so many *fiery Darts*, into the Souls of Men. Concerning which, St. Paul giveth this most wise and charitable Advice in *Eph. VI. 11, 16.* Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil. Above all, taking the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked. Now whether he setteth upon us in this Manner when we are at our *Devotion*, or at any other Time, altho' we may be at first inclined to think it impossible to withstand him, and so may be ready to despair of Help and Comfort; yet let us but look up to God with an Eye of Faith, remembering his gracious Promises, and his infinite Goodness and Truth, together with the Relation we bear to him through *Christ*, and so recollect our scattered Thoughts;

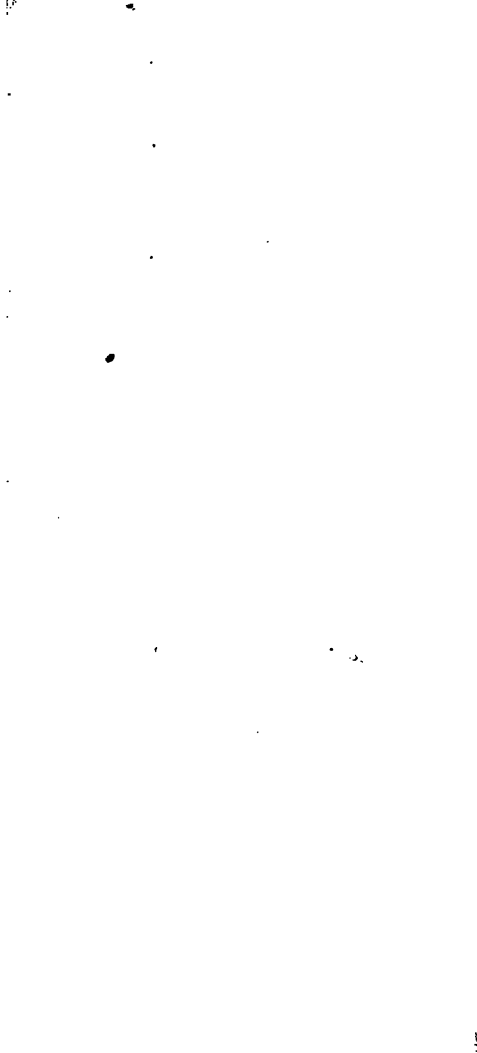
Lord Jesus Christ.

§. III. *Thirdly*, When we are engaged in *Prayer*, or the *Perf*
ligious Duty, we must be
entertain *Wandering Thought*
on and *Delight*; no, not that
to be good and profitable,
about some good and useful
are altogether unseasonable
proceeding frequently from
the grand Enemy of our *Souls*
vouereth to disturb our *Devotion*
he could effect that no other
fore we must not take Pleasure
willingly suffer them to
Minds. Neither should we be
courageed at any *Difficulties*
the Performance of this great

always fighting manfully under his Banner, against Sin, the World, and the Devil. And if we be faithful unto the Death, if we persevere unto the End, he will crown us with Victory, and will give us a Crown of Life, Rev. II. 10. And if we persevere with Patience, we may likewise hope by Degrees to obtain Spiritual Strength and Comfort, in this Life ; as the infinite Wisdom of God shall see most expedient for us. In the mean time, these Temptations and Difficulties are of great Use, to humble and purifie us, and to prepare us for the Enjoyment of greater Gifts here, and of higher Glory hereafter, as I have intimated already more than once ; but could not for all that forbear repeating and inculcating the same Observation in this Place. The All-wise Providence of God, and his heavenly Grace, will ever lead us in the safest and surest Way to Salvation, if we will but follow the infallible Conduct of his holy Spirit.

Therefore let us sincerely and resolutely endeavour to lay aside our *Wandering Thoughts*, immediately as soon as we perceive them to assault us. We must directly fix our Minds again upon what we are about, without staying to argue and dispute with them, or to consider their Guilt or evil Consequence. We must not then think of any thing concerning them, besides this, that we must and will immediately lay them aside. And this we must always endeavour to do, through the Assistance of divine Grace.

ty *Devotion*. And we may be assure
the Infinite Merits of Christ will
up all our Defects; and so long as
ert our utmost Endeavour, his and o
venly *Father* will graciously accept
for his Sake.







[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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